U.S. SPECIAL DELIVERY

Running Messenger Designs
1885-1902

The U.P.U. approved a special service to speedily deliver mail for an extra fee in 1885. The U.S. issued the first special service stamp on October 1, 1885, naming the service 'Special Delivery' with only 555 first class post offices providing the service. On October 1, 1886 service was extended to all post offices. No formal service exchange agreements with foreign countries existed until 1923. The U.S. and Canada had an informal agreement beginning in 1896.

The design incorporated a running messenger with a text inscription describing the immediate delivery service. In 1888, the text tablet changed to "at any office". In February, 1893 the stamp's color switched to orange to lessen any confusion with the one cent Columbian Exhibition value. The color reverted to blue in 1894.

This exhibit includes forerunner examples and continues in a traditional fashion presenting U.S. Special Delivery issues from 1885 until 1902 when delivery by bicycle became the norm and the design was revised. The American Banknote Co. printed the first three issues, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing printed the remainder. The rate, without weight limit, remained at 10¢ during this entire period.

Essays, proofs, stamps, local, domestic and territorial usages are followed by foreign destinations and origins. Rarities are specially matted with dark blue borders.

First Day of Issue (one day before service began) with script tracking number '1'